

AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION

Page 1--amend the first paragraph

B₁ The invention relates to a fastening system for panels, with retaining profiles arranged at the narrow sides of the panels, in particular for floor panels, ~~whose narrow sides are provided with retaining profiles~~, wherein mutually opposite retaining profiles of a panel match each other in such a way that similar panels can be fastened to one another, wherein at least one pair of oppositely disposed retaining profiles has complementary hook elements which can be hooked one into the other and that the hook elements have hook projections with retaining surfaces by which the panels in the assembled condition are held against each other in such a way that there is a gap-free floor surface.

Page 2--add the following paragraphs at line 20

B₂ A fastening system of the general kind set forth is known from EP 0 715 037 A1. Figures 1 and 2 of that publication propose a fastening system whose hook elements can be fitted one into the other by a joining movement perpendicular to the panel laying plane. As can be very clearly seen from Figure 1 of that publication the connection is very well secured by positive engagement against detachment in the plane of the panels and perpendicularly to the locked longitudinal edge, but the connection is particularly easy to release in its joining direction perpendicularly to the plane in which the panels are laid. In the arrangement of EP 0 715 037 A1 that problem arises for example if a soft underlay for damping the sound of footsteps is provided between the base and the panels. If only that panel whose hook elements are towards the base are loaded in the proximity of a join, it moves downwardly into the soft underlay for damping the

sound of footsteps and moves out of the hooking engagement with the associated hook element of the adjacent panel which is not loaded.

In a flat assembly comprising a very large number of individual panels a problem which arises is that of re-engaging a hook connection once it has come undone because the hook element which is associated with the base cannot be urged upwardly as it is not accessible.

The durability of the connection, particularly in the direction of the perpendicular joining movement, is therefore completely inadequate.

Therefore the object of the invention is to provide a fastening system which is of a simple design configuration and which is more durable than the known fastening system.

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(cont.) In accordance with the invention that object is attained in that the retaining surfaces of the hook projections are inclined, that the hook projections decrease from their free ends towards the legs and the retaining surfaces of the complementary hook projections bear against each other at least in a region-wise manner.

This measure ensures that the retaining surfaces of the hook projections engage behind each other in such a way that they can be hooked into each other only by elastic deformation. Release of the connection in a direction perpendicular to the plane in which the panels are laid is resisted by the retaining surfaces engaging behind each other.
